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challenge



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TORTURE UNDER CAPITALISM: BUSINESS AS USUAL



News that U.S. troops tortured and killed Iraqi prisoners should anger but not surprise us. Atrocities have always been the order of the day for the U.S. military, despite Donald Rumsfeld's claim that they're "un-American" aberrations. U.S. imperialism requires endless wars of conquest, in which U.S. working-class soldiers fight their class brothers and sisters in foreign lands. To get GIs to act against their own class interest, the rulers force on them a mindset that dehumanizes the enemy through racism, just like the Nazis catalogued as subhumans the millions of Jews, Gypsies, Russians and others they massacred.

The rulers' agents put an ideological seal of approval on racist war crimes. Shortly after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, Harvard Law School professor Alan Dershowitz implored the U.S. government to "introduce a legal procedure for going to a judge and applying for a warrant to use torture" on Arab prisoners (Harvard University Gazette, 12/13/01). And Colin Powell's much-touted doctrine of "overwhelming force" calls for the mass, indiscriminate killing of soldiers and non-combatants.

The racist U.S. war machine's criminal record stretches from Abu Ghraib prison back to the days of George Washington. [See article page 2.] It cannot be reformed by eliminating "a few bad apples" as the Bushites say or by the "improved training" the liberals demand. The imperialists' need for maximum profits and control of oil makes racist intimidation and killing the primary mission of the U.S. armed forces.

The storm of phony outrage on Capitol Hill amounts to nothing more than election-year maneuvering and a tactical dispute among U.S. rulers over how to

conduct this and future wars. CBS first broke the prison abuse story on "60 Minutes II" in order to discredit Bush. As CHALLENGE has noted, CBS's parent, Viacom — with Vietnam-era LBJ aide Joseph Califano and Clinton War Secretary William Cohen on its Board — belongs to the liberal wing of U.S. imperialism. It sees that far more troops, including allies, are needed to control Iraq and its oil. Viacom has just put out a slew of Bush-bashing books, including Bob Woodward's "Plan of Attack," Richard Clarke's "Against All Enemies," and Paul O'Neill's "The Price of Loyalty."

Liberals demand Rumsfeld's resignation while they count on a Kerry administration to "dramatically increase the size of the Army," as Max Boot of the Rockefeller-led Council on Foreign Relations said recently. (Los Angeles Times, 4/29/04) If Rumsfeld does take the fall, his sin will not have been invading Iraq or allowing prison torture but doing so "on the cheap," thereby failing to ensure a windfall for Exxon Mobil.

The soldiers at Abu Ghraib served this capitalist class at the expense of their own class interests. Given the absence of a large communist movement, it would have been very difficult for them to defy the brass and unite with their working-class Iraqi counterparts. But history shows [See article on Strasbourg, page 8] that communist leadership can transform the carnage of war into working-class triumphs. The proper response to the horror stories from Iraq is to ignore all capitalist candidates and to build — and spread the ideas of — the Progressive Labor Party. ☸

COPS CAN'T STOP COMMUNIST MAY DAY MARCH



BROOKLYN, NY, May 1 — The Flatbush neighborhood was the home of our May Day march and dinner celebration, and PLP was certainly at home here. Thirty-four hundred people bought CHALLENGE. May Day reminded us all of the working class's boundless capacity to withstand and reverse the attacks of capitalism in the fight for a communist revolution.

While U.S. imperialism appears unstoppable in its drive toward endless wars, workers here welcomed our openly communist demonstration of about 200 workers and youth marching in the city that is the center of U.S. capitalism, under banners reading "Turn the Guns Around." In a period in which the rulers treat our youth, especially black and Latin youth, like garbage, youth were at the front and center of our march. When the fascist cops assigned to the march tried to rush us along our route to finish as quickly as possible, we stood firm in preventing our message from being cut short by NYPD goons.

Capitalist schools do their best to mis-educate and demoralize our youth, but we showed these schemes can be defeated. At our dinner — to which an additional 50 people came — young people gave speeches, sang revolutionary songs and performed skits. They listened to a rousing opening speech which exposed U.S. capitalism's bald-

faced lie that this is the "best of all possible worlds," reminding us that working-class revolution will triumph over imperialist exploitation and war. While attacks on the international working class grow more acute, we don't despair. Instead, we take increased pride as we honor the communist heroes who opened this era of working-class revolution even as we continue to wage the struggle against the opportunism that reversed the great victories of these past giants.

May Day 2004 contained the seeds of a new future, a communist future. We need many millions more involved in bringing this to pass. This is a life and death question for our movement and for the future of our class. We've made some gains in our numbers this year, especially among youth. Even more important was the quality of these recruits.

The creativity, boldness, persistence and the love between working-class brothers and sisters displayed on this May Day, and in the organizing leading up to it, made a lasting impression on many new friends. Our ideas resonate deep in the souls of thousands now and many millions more we've yet to meet. Our potential remains earthshaking. Each May Day is a step in our march from the potential to the actual. ☸

IMPERIALISM = TORTURE AND BRUTALITY

As Marx pointed out over 150 years ago, the profit system was born dripping with blood from the world's working class. U.S. capitalism was built on racist terror, the torture and mass murder of African slaves and genocide against the indigenous Native Americans. During the British colonization of India, the imperialists chopped off the thumbs of thousands of handloom weavers to undercut their competitive edge in textile manufacturing. Capitalism and imperialism have always used torture and brutality as the "price of doing business." These butchers will pay a much higher price when they are swept away by communist revolution.

In 1776, the U.S. ruling class used 6,000 troops to raze more than 20 Cherokee villages, destroying crops and massacring noncombatants. In 1864, U.S. territorial military commander Colonel John Chivington ordered the brutal murder of as many as 200 Cheyenne and Arapaho Indians at Sand Creek, Colorado, more than half being women and children. In 1868, Lieutenant George Armstrong Custer's Seventh U.S. Cavalry attacked civilians in a Cheyenne village camped along the Washita River in Oklahoma, murdering more than 100, including women and children.

Today, the fact that John Negroponte has been named U.S. ambassador to Iraq reveals how much U.S. policy is based on mass terror. Negroponte was the Reagan-Bush Sr. ambassador to Honduras, commanding the death squads that murdered thousands throughout Central America. During Negroponte's tenure, a 1983 CIA torture manual was used in Honduras (Baltimore Sun, 1/27/79). This manual's methods have been used in Iraq and at Guantanamo.

Since World War II, the CIA has taught and practiced torture. In the late 1960s, Dan Mitrione worked for the U.S. Office of Public Safety, part of the Agency for International Development. In Brazil, he "advised" police how to apply electric shock to prisoners without killing them. In Uruguay, according to the former chief of police intelligence, he "professionalized" torture and "advised" on psychological techniques, such as playing tapes of women and children screaming, giving the impression that the prisoners' families were being tortured. In Montevideo, he tortured four vagrants to death in the soundproofed cellar of his house for the benefit of Uruguayan

police officers. Ultimately he was kidnapped and killed by the Tupamaros.

In 1968, the CIA experimented with trying to break suspected leaders of Vietnam's National Liberation Front. In one, they opened the skulls of three prisoners and planted electrodes in their brains. They were then put in a room and given knives. The CIA hoped that when the electrodes were activated they would attack each other. When they didn't, they were shot and their bodies burned. Groups of Vietnamese prisoners were routinely questioned in helicopters. Those who didn't talk were handcuffed behind their backs and hurled to their deaths. (See "Hidden Terrors" by A.J. Langguth and "Journey into Madness" by Gordon Thomas)

One of the best-known and most heinous programs developed in Vietnam to destroy the insurgency was Operation Phoenix, involving the torture and murder of prisoners, and the displacement of whole populations into internment camps. Many civilians were also tortured and murdered in

Lebanon, journalist Robert Fisk visited Khiam prison. He wrote, "The torturers had just left but the horror remained.

There was the whipping pole and the window grilles where prisoners were tied naked for days, freezing water thrown over them at night. Then there were the electric leads for the little dynamo — the machine mercifully taken off to Israel by the interrogators — which had the inmates shrieking with pain when the electrodes touched their fingers or penises. And there were the handcuffs, which an ex-prisoner handed to me yesterday afternoon. Engraved into the steel were the words: 'The Peerless Handcuff Co., Springfield, Mass. Made



Cameron also used Thorazine, Nembutal and Seconal, followed by severe electro-shock, after which taped messages were played repeatedly 16 hours a day.

"I can make anybody confess to anything," bragged former Chicago Police Cmdr. Jon Burge about torturing suspects at a South Side police station. The sister of another former detective said, "They began to boast about power and what really happens in a police station." She said, "When they get them in a police station, they give them hell...They beat the shit out of them. They throw them against walls. They burn them against radiators. They smother them. They poke them with objects. They did something to one guy's testicles." In April 2002, a special prosecutor was appointed to investigate more than five dozen torture allegations.

In recent years the UN, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have charged the U.S. with tolerating torture in prisons in many states, ranging from solitary confinement for 23 hour a day in concrete boxes for years, to jolting prisoners with 50,000-volt shocks through a belt they're forced to wear.

The rulers will do anything to keep the profits flowing. They have invested millions of dollars and hours to perfect the unimaginable. But no amount of torture or high-tech weaponry will save them from their fate. A mass, international PLP will take its best shots and ultimately smash them and their torture chambers. And all the torturers, death squads, racist/fascist killers and war criminals will get their just desserts. ☺

In recent years the UN, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have charged the U.S. with tolerating torture in prisons in many states, ranging from solitary confinement for 23 hour a day in concrete boxes for years, to jolting prisoners with 50,000-volt shocks through a belt they're forced to wear.

the search for information.

Jesse Leaf, former chief CIA analyst on Iran, said the CIA knew of the torture of Iranians by the Savak, the Shah's hated secret police the CIA helped create. Leaf said a senior CIA official instructed the Savak on torture methods, and that CIA torture seminars "were based on German torture techniques from World War II." (New York Times, 1/7/79)

The Israelis are U.S. partners in torture. Palestinian youths as young as 14 are badly beaten, their heads shoved into toilet bowls. When Israel retreated from its "security strip" in southern

in USA.'" (The Independent, 5/25, 2000)

But torture is not reserved for distant lands. LSD and other hallucinogens were given to U.S. soldiers without their knowledge. More than a thousand suffered serious psychological afflictions. The CIA funded Dr. Ewen Cameron at McGill University, a pioneer in sensory deprivation. Cameron once locked a woman in a small box for 35 days, deprived of light, smell or sound. CIA doctors were amazed since their own sensory deprivation experiments in 1955 had induced severe psychological reactions in less than 40 hours.

WHAT WE FIGHT FOR

☐PLP fights to smash capitalism—wage slavery. While the bosses and their mouthpieces claim "communism is dead," capitalism is the real failure for billions all over the world. The Soviet Union and China returned to capitalism because socialism maintained too many aspects of the profit system, like wages and divisions of labor.

☐Capitalism inevitably leads to wars. PLP organizes workers, students and soldiers to turn these wars into a revolution for communism. This fight for the dictatorship of the proletariat requires a mass Red Army led by the communist PLP.

☐Communism means working collectively to build a society where sharing is based on need. We will abolish work for wages, money and profit. Everyone will share society's benefits and burdens.

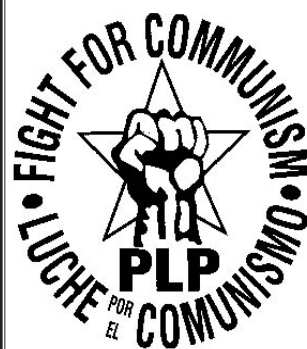
☐Communism means abolishing racism and the concept of race.

☐Communism means abolishing the special oppression of women workers.

☐Communism means abolishing nations and nationalism. One international working class, one world, one Party.

☐Communism means the Party leads every aspect of society. For this to work, millions of workers — eventually everyone — must become communist organizers.

JOIN US!



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YOUTH LEAD PLP MARCHERS IN LA GARMENT CENTER

LOS ANGELES, May 1 — Chanting “Fight for Communism! Power to the Workers!,” PLP youth organized a very powerful, spirited May Day march here today of nearly 200 — bigger than last year — in the center of downtown, witnessed by thousands of garment workers, several of whom joined. Workers along the sidewalks eagerly grabbed all our CHALLENGES (over 600) and 4,000 leaflets.

The multi-racial parade, filled mostly with youth, proudly waved the red banners of revolution and championed communism as the answer to the racism, fascism and imperialist war that the capitalist system needs like a vampire needs blood. More than in recent years, workers and stu-

dents joined the march. The security force of mainly black and Latin high school students was well-organized. It was formed from activity at and after school, and a consistent daily struggle about the nature of this rotten system and the need for revolutionary change.

Several workers came from leaflets. Some students came from a rally earlier in the week against racist cutbacks where they applauded a communist speaker calling on them to end a murderous system that kills our brothers and sisters in Iraq while cutting our schools’ education and health care. As he urged them to march on May Day, the mis-leaders tried to push him off the stage and Arriana Huffington tried

to grab his microphone. Another student marcher had spoken for revolution at a rally against the cutbacks a few weeks before. Her entire class read the PLP leaflet and many expressed interest in marching. These events resulted from years of struggle and base-building.

A group of students came from a national student organization where they had fought for a resolution calling on students to help win working-class soldiers to resist imperialism. One Latina student from this group who had been to many different demonstrations, and paid the full fare for the long trip, said, “Thank you so much for inviting me. I didn’t know there was anything like this out there.”

At the spirited dinner afterwards, we heard a very inspiring speech about the fight against the racist cutbacks in education and the war in Iraq. The speaker’s mother had to wait a long time for a needed operation because of staff cuts while the bosses spend billions to kill Iraqis for oil profits. He called on all present to join PLP. Another speaker described the fight for the resolution in the national student group and urged her fellow marchers to join PLP. Several marchers did just that!



Others committed themselves to reading and distributing CHALLENGE. Revolutionary poetry read by its writers excited everyone. High school students performed “Good Morning Revolution” by Langston Hughes. The hall was decorated with CHALLENGE front-pages. We enjoyed a power point presentation about the importance of our press in galvanizing the anger of workers, students and soldiers toward revolution.

More youth than ever organized this May Day, collectively solving problems on the spot. This bodes well for PLP’s future. Although our numbers are modest, with a long way to go, we’ve seen hard work pay off, helping consolidate our victories, leading to ever bigger ones.

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Liberal-Led Caravan Takes Right-wing Road

Before the May Day march, some youth went to sell CHALLENGE and distribute Party literature at a liberal-led caravan for immigrant rights. We sold 60 papers to about 400 caravaners boarding buses for a day of speeches by politicians throughout LA. When they heard we were headed for a May Day March on Broadway, to unite workers and students against the bosses, many wondered why the caravan was headed to the West LA Federal Building instead. Many read CHALLENGE on the buses (see letter, page 6). Meanwhile, when a woman mistakenly waiting for the caravan at our march was told this was PLP’s communist May Day event, not the liberal-led caravan, she decided to march with us. But when two people headed for our march mistakenly went to MacArthur Park, caravan organizers told them, “Get on the bus. We’re going to that march right now.” Over the bus captain’s protests, they said, “We’re going on our own. We’ll see you at Olympic and Broadway.” Of course, the caravan stayed as far away from the communist May Day March as possible! ☺

NYC Dinner Reviews Historic May Days, Punctures Lesser-Evil Illusions

NEW YORK CITY, May 1 — PLP celebrated May Day, the international working-class holiday, with many activities here, including a militant march in Brooklyn and two dinners. At one dinner 250 enthusiastic workers and youth enjoyed a program which included speakers, musical and theatrical performances and an open mike session. First we heard the history of May Day, then a powerful keynote speech and then a series of inspiring testimonials from workers present at historic PLP May Day marches.

The keynote speech’s theme was “Dangerous Illusions.” (See excerpts, p. 5) In this election year, workers are being offered the “anyone-but-Bush” concept, a “lesser-evil” line backing the Democratic Party’s Kerry, representing the liberal wing of the ruling class that wants to intensify the war in Iraq. Communists know there’s no such thing as a “good boss” or “lesser evil” when it comes to the ruling class and its capitalist dictatorship. So the good news is that we can expose these dangerous illusions by spreading communist ideas among the working class and organizing for a real alternative — communist revolution!

The testimonials from previous historic May Day marches included the very first one in 1971; the defeat of the fascist/racist ROAR in Boston, 1975; the smashing of the Neo-Nazis in Marquette Park, Chicago, 1979; and the Party’s participation in the militant May Day celebration in El Salvador, 1987. These May Day tributes demonstrate the Party’s strong commitment to organizing the international working class to fight for communism and against racism, fascism, sexism and exploitation worldwide.

The program also included talks by a new member explaining why she joined PLP and a veteran old-timer describing why and how he became a life-long communist (see excerpts, p. 5)

The PLP Singers sounded forth with several inspiring songs throughout the evening, including ones newly-composed about recent events.

After a delicious dinner, cooked by many of those



attending, the open mike session was energized by powerful musical performances from workers in the audience. The high point was an inspiring letter from a comrade organizing in the military (see text, p. 6). This comrade proved that most workers serving in the bosses’ imperialist military are not sadistic torturers like the MPs and private mercenaries running Iraqi prisons. Working-class black, Latin and white soldiers in Iraq who enlist for education money or job training are becoming disillusioned by the profit motives of Exxon-Mobil, Halliburton, Mercks Inc. (the different private “security” companies and their war criminal fascist employees from South Africa, UK, Australia, France, Chile, Colombia, etc.) behind this war. Equally troubling is the vicious murder, rape, and torture of Iraqi workers, and by the utter lack of rations, equipment and benefits provided by the bosses’ military. Complaints are rampant. Communist organizing can win these soldiers to red ideas and transform this anger into militant opposition to the imperialists’ war machine as happened with tens of thousands of rebellious GIs and sailors during the Vietnam War.

This year’s May Day celebration was a modest advance for our movement. It was informative and will motivate us to intensify our efforts to build the Party and make next year’s May Day celebration bigger and better! ☺

Internationalism Championed At Chicago Dinner

CHICAGO, IL, May 1 — “It was really great. Me and my brother were just talking about a lot of these ideas earlier in the day,” declared a Ford worker about the PLP May Day dinner, attended by more than 80 workers and students. A bloc of workers from Stroger Cook County Hospital came, fresh from their fight that stopped the racist firing of nine black respiratory therapists. They were joined by a bloc of students from Purdue University—Calumet, a small group of auto and steel workers and more.

PLP’s internationalism was reflected both in the delicious food and the make-up of the participants. Immigrant workers and students from Mexico, the Caribbean, Pakistan, Sudan, Ethiopia, the Philippines, Ecuador, Ghana and Peru, gave life to the fight for international communist revolution and the need to smash all borders.

The program included songs led by the PLP workers’ chorus and a very funny skit, performed by the Purdue students — a “game show” featuring Bush, Rice, Cheney, Kerry, Clinton, Schwarzenegger and Howard Stern. Nine Stroger workers, including three respiratory therapists, gave a presentation accompanied by slides, describing their struggle against the bosses and union leaders and addressing questions raised by their co-workers.

A young black worker explained how he came to terms with the necessity of taking responsibility for the Party; exposed Kerry and the Democrats for demanding even more troops in Iraq; and invited everyone to join the PLP Summer Project in Boston during the Democratic Party Convention.

The keynote speech (see excerpts page 5) stressed having confidence in the workers, and the patience to win them to the Party as the way out of imperialism’s new Dark Ages. Building unbreakable ties with many workers, on many levels, will sustain us through hard times, secure the Party against fascist terror and ultimately destroy capitalism. Relying on the workers and organizing our lives around those we’re trying to win will make us a stronger Party. The dinner closed with everyone standing and singing the Internationale. ☺

LATIN AMERICA

REBUILDING THE COMMUNIST MOVEMENT



Red Symbols Shine in El Salvador

SAN SALVADOR, May 1 — “City workers, farm workers, students, unite!”; “Free the STISS political prisoners!” (Social Security workers arrested this week); “Send the children of the rich to Iraq!” These chants resounded through the main streets of the capital on this International Workers’ Day.

Thousands of workers marched to commemorate the historic general strike in Chicago and to protest the repression and brutality of the National Civil

Police (created by the “peace” accords between the Government and the FMLN), as well as to oppose the war in Iraq and the sending of Salvadoran troops there.

“Marx Lives!” was one wall painting along the line of march, as well as banners, flags, berets, T-shirts, scarves, and CHALLENGE-DESAFIO, advocating the fight for communism. For many years, such symbols were absent from these marches. After the 1992 “peace”

accords, only PLP revived these communist symbols. Today thousands of workers and students here are taking them up as their own.

Many workers nation-wide already know CHALLENGE. The youth distributing it were surrounded by many workers asking for copies. Among them were electrical, health and education workers, those from the maquilas, as well as university and high school students. Some exclaimed, “This paper is really something”; “How can we get it regularly?”

A health care worker said, “I always read CHALLENGE; the election articles were really good.” He added, “PLP developed the successful movement against the war in Vietnam. Today we must do the same against the war in Iraq.”

Over 500 CHALLENGES and 1,500 leaflets were distributed. We met friends who know PLP. We also made contact with a group of friends who had become inactive. We planned meetings and study groups with them about our communist ideas and about the war in Iraq.

This week workers from Social Security (the national public health care system)

and from other organizations occupied the buildings of the Metropolitan Cathedral of San Salvador, leading to a sharp 24-hour confrontation with the police. The cops’ brutality encountered the hatred of the working class.

“Today rocks, tomorrow guns” responded the May Day marchers to the provocation by cops who threatened university students with, “You’ll find Ricardo Monge [head of the Social Security union] dead on a coffee plantation.” Monge is currently imprisoned along with 35 other workers, arrested during the fight at the Cathedral. They threw rocks at cops using tear gas and guns.

The National Civil Police includes ex-members of the FMLN and of the murderous National Guard, and engages in the same kind of reign of terror used in the 1970’s and ’80’s. But similarly, many workers are ready to struggle against the same oppressive capitalist system.

The working class here and worldwide proudly stands on the shoulders of past revolutionary giants. Long Live May Day, the international working class and the Progressive Labor Party!✱

Mexico: Workers Greet PLP’ers

MEXICO CITY, May 2 — A PLP contingent of 70 workers and students raised the red flag of communist revolution on May Day. We marched with contingents of IMSS (social security) workers, electricians, phone workers and tens of thousands of others. Thousands of CHALLENGES-DESAFIOS were distributed and our chants like, “Only communism will liberate workers,” reached tens of thousands of demonstrators. Many workers greeted us with clenched fists of solidarity and joined our chants.

The bosses are attacking the pensions of thousands of IMSS workers (see CHALLENGE, 5/12). The workers called for a strike against these attacks and demanded the resignation of IMSS boss Levy. IMSS workers that marched with PLP used the CHALLENGE article to call on fellow workers to take the offensive by grasping our communist politics. The article also said these attacks must be seen in light of world capitalism’s endless wars, jobless recoveries and imperialist rivalry.

Women and youth, who are guaranteeing the future of our Party and the future emancipation



of the working class, formed most of the PLP contingent.

On May 2, half of the PLP contingent participated in a cadre school to strengthen their communist understanding and improve our efforts at building the Party. Several youth were critical, and self-critical, that even though we reached thousands of workers, our contingent was smaller than last year. This was partly due to a number of our comrades having had to move because of severe economic conditions. But we all took the criticism to heart and are committed to doing better in the future.✱

Colombia’s Oil Strikers Defy Death-Squad Bosses

BOGOTA, COLOMBIA, May 12 — On April 22, oil workers at the state-owned Ecopetrol struck for the first time in 25 years, though workers in many refineries have always fought the bosses’ attacks. In the last decade, many union activists have been killed or jailed, accused of being “terrorists.” In recent months 100 militant workers have been fired.

Bush buddy Colombian President Uribe is carrying out orders from the IMF (International Monetary Fund) to privatize Ecopetrol, selling it to various imperialist oil moguls. This requires busting the union (USO) and attacking workers’ wages and benefits.

In 2002, Ecopetrol proposed a contract with many cutbacks. It won an arbitration judgment against the workers, militarized the plants and harassed workers in order to avoid a strike. But workers kept fighting for their jobs and their lives. After dumping a sellout union leadership a year ago, they finally struck last month.

Colombia has become an important oil-producing country. Huge new deposits are being discovered. Colombia’s government, accused of being one of the world’s worst human rights violators, has sided with the U.S. in the capitalist-imperialist struggle for control of South America. Just this week, dozens of Colombian paramilitaries (many active or former soldiers) were arrested in



Venezuela, accused of preparing a coup against President Chavez, who’s on the Bushites’ hit list.

But Colombia’s working class needs more than unionism or militant strikes. A combination of fascist repression and union hacks has devastated unions here, similar to the rest of the capitalist world. Today, USO represents only a small fraction of the Ecopetrol workforce. Just 4% of Colombia’s workforce is unionized.

PLP members have participated in many Ecopetrol strikers’ protests, bringing them our communist politics. Many — including those at the huge May Day march here — have welcomed our literature. We must redouble our efforts to ensure that strikes like those at Ecopetrol become schools for communism, and help build the only road out of this capitalist hell: communist revolution.✱

PLP’s Red Flag Flies High in Bogotá

BOGOTA, COLOMBIA, May 1 — A May Day contingent of more than 60 PLP members and friends marched here among 300,000 union workers, the unemployed and youth. It was the biggest May Day in recent history.

PLP held high the red flag of communist revolution, distributing hundreds of CHALLENGE-DESAFIOS and 5,000 leaflets. “Workers rise up and show your fists” was a chant resounding along the route of the march. Thousands greeted our red contingent with the fist of working-class solidarity. Many chanted our slogans.

Oil workers are striking here, battling the state-owned company which the government wants to

privatize while busting the union. (See article this page) Workers in our contingent spread the idea that our communist politics is the best way for workers to confront the bosses in this era of fascist terror, endless oil wars and capitalist crisis.

Many in our contingent were young people, representing our movement’s future. We made new friends who we plan to follow up.

The Army and the cops attacked the March as it reached Bolivar Square when hundreds of youth broke with the sellout hacks leading it. Demonstrators, cops and soldiers were injured in street battles that lasted for one hour.✱

PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY'S 34TH MAY DAY MARCHES ON

PLP celebrated May Day, the International Working Class Day, with marches in the U.S. and contingents at trade union marches in several Latin American cities, as well as at dinners. Here are excerpts from some of the speeches at these events drawing important political lessons for the world's working class and its allies. The full texts and other speeches are available on PLP's website, PLP.org

Keynote Speech At a New York City Dinner

STATE OF THE WORLD ADDRESS

There is good news and bad news:

The bad news is that capitalism is still here. Class struggle is hardly on the radar screen for now, and workers still hold very dangerous illusions about reform.

The good news is that communist ideas and the Progressive Labor Party are alive and well and we are slowly, but surely, growing both in the United States and internationally.

Communists have the ideas and the practice that can turn bad news into good news for the working class....

Dangerous illusions...dominate the "anybody but Bush" movement. Of course Bush is an open liar and a mass murderer –

but Bush and Kerry are more similar than different. Kerry, unlike Bush, is slick and understands that workers in the US are angry. Kerry places the blame for cutbacks and job loss only on those companies who move production outside the US. Kerry does not criticize Boeing, which has downsized tens of thousands of workers from their Washington State and Missouri plants, while moving some of that production to US prisons. Kerry would NEVER make the link between the soaring war budget and job loss – or the racist and sexist nature of slave labor which is enabled by welfare reform and an overflowing prison population — the largest in the industrialized world. This is because Kerry likes to portray himself as a progressive. WE KNOW BETTER! Kerry supported "welfare reform," "immigration reform," "counter terrorism" and the "effective death penalty laws" all of which created the legal basis for the Patriot Act and U.S. fascism. And, Kerry criticizes Bush for not building the homeland security police state fast enough, and well enough.

Kerry wants to send more, not less, troops to Iraq. His "national service" plan is a trick to win more people into the military. That is because Kerry, like Bush, like Clinton, like Nixon, like Johnson, like Kennedy, like FDR, only serve the needs of the ruling class, especially when it comes to controlling the working class, vital resources and key strategic military positions. And, Kerry, like Bush, both serve and belong to the capitalist ruling elite. Their interest is fundamentally opposed to the interests of the working class....

Daimler/Chrysler's boss Jorgen Schrempp echoed Hitler when he said: "We have a clear edge today in the world; we have Poland, we have Hungary, and we have the Czech Republic!"

Well, what do we have? — WE have the Progressive Labor Party...WE have communist ideas...WE have the international working class and its allies with a world to win. Whether Bush or Kerry, Aristide or Putin, from South Africa to Haiti, from the U.S. to the EU, workers need to dump all their oppressors....

Keynote Speech at Chicago PLP Event

The good news is, it's MAY DAY and we're going to win, no matter how long it takes. The bad news is, it's going to get worse before it gets better. Capitalism is proving every day that it can only provide the world's workers with endless imperialist wars, mass racist poverty, fascist Homeland Security and police terror, famines, "ethnic cleansing" genocide and more. This is the "triumph" of capitalism, and it will continue until it is smashed by communist revolution....

IRAQ

One year ago Bush flew onto an aircraft carrier Lincoln and said, "Mission Accomplished!"

Saddam. Bush, the Taliban, Kerry & Co., they all represent one or another set of billionaires. But if we fight to make communist politics primary, we can build a mass international PLP, from Chicago to Baghdad....

Can you believe it? What an asshole!

And before the war, Rumsfeld said the Iraqis would welcome US troops and throw flowers at them. Instead they've been showered with Rocket Propelled Grenades and roadside ambushes.

The "Go It Alone" gang in the White House is drawing US imperialism very close to a major defeat in Iraq and an even greater strategic setback in the Middle East and South Asia.

The US is in a tight spot.... Apparently no one in the White house or the Pentagon knows that in order to get out of a hole, you first have to stop digging.

This May Day, U.S. imperialism faces the specter of a strategic defeat in the Middle East, which threatens their position as the top dog among imperialists....

It's possible the U.S. can prevail, or make a deal with the EU, Russia and China to share the spoils in return for some badly needed help. But a few things are clear. Their "aura" of "invincibility" has been badly shaken. And the morale of US troops and the US working class is deteriorating as the body bags pile up. The Vietnam Syndrome is very much alive, and US rulers may never be able to get past it.

But...whatever happens, in the Middle East or the upcoming elections, there will be no victory for the international working class. The Muslim fundamentalists are anti-communist murderers who want to seize the oil profits and cut their own deals. Kerry, McCain, Hillary Clinton and the N.Y. Times are attacking Bush for his failures, and are calling for even more troops and a long stay.

The only solution to imperialist bloodbaths is international communist revolution, and that's why we're here today....



Politics is primary over weapons....

The jihadists, nationalists, liberal Democrats...have no solutions for us. Saddam. Bush, the Taliban, Kerry & Co., they all represent one or another set of billionaires. But if we fight to make communist politics primary, we can build a mass international PLP, from Chicago to Baghdad....

Revolutionary communist leader Josef Stalin warned that the defeat of the Soviet Union would usher in a new Dark Age....The collapse of the old movement was the worst defeat the working class has ever suffered. Recovering from it is taking generations....

The most important error our Party made was to underestimate the significance of this defeat, brought on by the old movement's own internal weaknesses.... We failed to understand the devastating consequences this would have on the international working class, and the new life it would give U.S. imperialism. Again, politics is primary....

[But] We have the Party and its line. And we have the strategy of building a base in the working class. The Party, with all its shortcomings and weaknesses, teaches us to be objective and to serve the working class rather than ourselves. We have a lot to offer the workers in terms of political understanding. But it's a two-way street. The workers have a lot to offer us, maybe more. By having confidence in the workers, and the patience to win them to the Party, we can build unbreakable ties with many workers, on many levels, that will not only sustain us through hard times, but secure the Party against fascist terror and ultimately destroy imperialism. Relying on the workers, and organizing your life around those you are trying to win, will make you a better communist and make us a stronger Party. We can't hope to win any other way. ☺



LA MAY DAY

continued from page 3

WEST COAST PLP MAY DAY DINNER

Youth and workers took the lead in organizing a festive and yet serious multi-racial May Day dinner here. Over 170 attended an exciting program of revolutionary songs, poetry, and political speeches. Several who came joined PLP. The hall was decorated with red balloons and flowers, revolutionary art and posters and past CHALLENGES, including one showing PLP's role in the 1964 Harlem rebellion.

An industrial worker described the fight for com-

munist and building the Party on his job. A small group of his co-workers came, among 50 invited, all of whom take the party seriously and have the potential to become an important force as the bosses' attacks make it increasingly impossible for workers to live in the old way. He said that it would be short-sighted to become discouraged at difficulties in building the Party now. He explained that in other countries at other times it also appeared that workers would never rise up. But while the process took years to unfold, they DID rebel in mass struggle against the rulers.

Now, he said, PLP is fighting for communism — not socialism — to eliminate the wage system and all bosses' borders. "We will grow and we will win."

Another speaker related the history of working-class soldiers' resistance inside the military. He urged those present to spread the fight for revolutionary politics among soldiers and sailors.

A third stressed the importance of an international party, explaining he joined PLP as an industrial worker in Mexico and now was forced to become a garment worker in LA, where he continues to build the Party, along with many other garment workers present.

A committee of youth and workers, some active for the first time, led the organizing of every aspect of the dinner. Its success lay in deep base-building and serious political work in several concentrations, in some cases over many years. Comrades vowed to continue the struggle with those who came and many who didn't but who will attend in the future as we deepen our ties and struggle with them and against the murderous bosses. ☺

LETTERS

Thinking Soldiers Dangerous for Bosses

In a recent discussion, an officer said that capitalism and oil propel the war in Iraq. He stated that the difference between U.S. soldiers and people in “third world” countries is, “They’re prepared to die; Americans are not.” He noted that the Somali fighters portrayed in the “Black Hawk Down” movie were willing to die for their cause and, “We have to prepare ourselves to die.”

Can working-class soldiers be won to fight for capitalism? During chow the other day, a group of us asked a young brown-skinned Special Forces soldier from El Salvador what he thought about being in the Middle East. “We’re just here to make money,” he said. “Not our money, but their money. If you wear this uniform you understand that you’re just a pawn for the politicians.”

I asked him how he felt about risking his life for the rich. He replied, “When we train, people break bones, people die. Coming to Iraq is just doing what we’ve been doing during training anyway: getting injured and losing our lives.” One soldier in my unit coolly nodded his head in agreement. They were prepared to die.

Not all soldiers are. “No, I don’t think it’s worth fighting for,” said one. “That’s what gets me mad, the fact that people get killed to make some people money.” I showed him a pamphlet on GI rebellions in Vietnam and asked if it’s worth fighting to change the system. “A war within a war? That sounds like something worth fighting for. Maybe that’s what we need.” When I asked him about the prospects of a revolution, he hesitated. “I don’t think it can really happen. The system works fine as it is. Let’s just give it a chance to get better.”

Many soldiers understand that we’re fighting for oil profits in this war. But they’re either content with what this system offers or cynical about other workers and soldiers. One soldier said, “No, I don’t think a [communist] society like that is possible. People are just too greedy.”

I showed a soldier an article about capitalism, revolution and why we’re here in the Middle East, and asked him what he thought about it. He said, “I never thought about it.” I stared straight at him and asked what he meant. He stared back and said he knew we were here for money, but in terms of capitalism and revolution, “I never really thought about it.”

After spending two months on a base training for deployment, I went home on leave and noticed things on my block I never saw before. One woman’s discount clothes were rough and mismatched. Old people walked the crowded sidewalks with canes and in wheelchairs. A slim bearded man with dirty jeans, stained turtleneck and layers of thin coats stood on the corner begging for change to get a sandwich. Those are normal sights almost anywhere in this capitalist world. But I saw things anew because the military creates an environment where you never have to think about what you’re fighting for if you don’t want to.

On base, almost everyone is in uniform, no one goes hungry because there are chow halls and MRE’s [Meals Ready to Eat], housing is free, even if it’s a tent, and few soldiers are old and sick. Overseas pay is tax-free, many are receiving generous housing allowances for the first time, and we get extra money for being in a hazard zone. The



basic necessities are provided for as long as soldiers are willing to secure Iraq oil for U.S. imperialism.

As we train with live ammo, harden our vehicles to stop shrapnel and bullets, as we fuel HMMVs, pick up armor plating for our flak vests and do our daily work in offices, supply rooms and motor pools, the military encourages us to enjoy the food, pay, shopping at the PX, and to visit the recreation center. They rarely discuss risking disease, heat injuries, small arms fire, RPGs [rocket-propelled grenades], and IEDs [Improvised Explosive Devices].

“Do what you gotta do and go home,” and “All we gotta get through is this year,” are phrases heard often here. One sergeant advised me, “Just worry about your job and don’t think about anything else.” Senior NCOs [non-commissioned officers] and officers encourage us to forget that our job is to occupy the Middle East for U.S. imperialism.

“We’re driven not to think about these things,” the same soldier told me. He sat beside me gazing into the article we were reading for a long time, thinking. He thought about his people, especially poor people in his neighborhood. He saw how capitalism makes the poor poorer and the rich richer. Finally he said, “I think we need a revolution there.” After a pause, he added, “Capitalism is set up to benefit the few and that’s what gets me mad.”

In a poem, a communist told a general that a soldier can fly and can kill, but has one defect — s/he can think. The generals and politicians do all they can to correct that defect, because they understand that a thinking soldier is a dangerous thing.

Red GI

Backing Kerry Traps Anti-War Movement

The war in Iraq could be unraveling for U.S. bosses, and spreading. Usually springtime is a high point of student activity. Where is the anti-war movement? Why are the campuses so quiet?

I recently attended a worker-student speak-out at the University of Chicago, where nurses have taken a strike vote. When I spoke I tried to link the nurses’ struggle to the war by pointing out that UC plays a major role for US imperialism. Its graduates include Paul Wolfowitz, #2 at the Pentagon, Attorney General Ashcroft, who is implementing the fascist Homeland security police state, and Ahmed Chalabi, who the Bush gang wants to install as Iraq’s leader. I pointed out how at least three members of the Board of Governors, including the University President, are on the Council on Foreign Relations. They don’t call it the Rockefeller Chapel at this school for nothing.

I said that if the nurses strike, they would be fighting a war-maker and strike-breaker. Politically it would be on a par with a strike at a Humvee or missile factory. I said the best thing students could do was to strike against the war.

People liked it, and afterwards I asked a few students why the campus was so quiet. They basically said, “Students are too conservative.”

I think it’s due to the lack of a fighting world communist movement, and the fact that the nationalist and Jihadist opposition to U.S. imperialism does not inspire the masses.

But also, the anti-war forces are caught in a trap. The movement’s main goal is to dump Bush, which means electing Kerry. You can’t have it both ways. You can’t call for the defeat of U.S. imperialism, or even to get the U.S. out of Iraq, when the political leadership of the movement is committed to electing the Democrats, the same gang calling for more troops and permanent military bases.

A Chicago comrade

A ‘Free’ Press for Those Who Own It

It shouldn’t really be any surprise that the liberal Washington Post — don’t we always point out that the liberals hold the door open for fascism? — helped screw D.C. area grocery workers (CHALLENGE, May 12). The Post’s dirty secret is that it has a lot of experience screwing its own workers.

In 1975 the Post led the way for newspaper publishers nation-wide by forcing its unionized pressmen out on strike, hiring scabs to keep the paper running until the union was broken. Once they succeeded, they forced other unions, including the Newspaper Guild, to surrender their union-shop rights in 1979. Of course, the Guild helped bring that on itself by not walking out with the pressmen.

Ever since, the Post has used the disunity of the workers to force down wages and working conditions. In 1975, the Post ranked #1 in salary scales among newspapers; now it’s #19...and sinking. In the latest contract negotiations, the Post even demanded that the Guild give up the right to distribute union materials and bulletins to members at work — a right guaranteed under Federal labor law!

A.J. Liebling said a long time ago, “Freedom of the press only belongs to those who own one.”

Former member, Washington-Baltimore Newspaper Guild

Riders Hear Real May Day Story

On May 1, I rode in the bus caravan for

immigrants’ rights, although the caravan wasn’t really celebrating May Day. Generally, it made a joke of its real significance for the international working class.

But things got very interesting in my bus. A worker explained the origin and significance of May Day. He also said that next year we should demand a march in the center of Los Angeles. A leaflet about the history of May Day and the importance of workers’ international unity and solidarity, written by some students who helped with the caravan, was read in English and Spanish.

Many people agreed with the idea of marching in the center of LA instead of traveling on the buses. No one really understood why the buses went to the western part of the city.

I think the organizers mainly wanted to divert people’s anger at this moment and take us down the road of cheap politics, trying to make us believe these bosses’ politicians and their politics will solve workers problems here and worldwide.

Before boarding the buses, many people bought CHALLENGE and read it on the bus.

While these organizers did keep masses from marching together, they didn’t completely achieve their objective because we and CHALLENGE were there, bringing aspects of our communist ideas to the workers. Hopefully our efforts will help to build a mass movement, in which workers organize not only for legal residence and driver’s licenses but to destroy this system that oppresses us, that together we can fight for and build a communist society where no one needs “legal” documents.

LA comrade

May Day Is For All Workers

Even though the Party has been fighting for the idea of working in mass organizations, not all of us put it into practice. I say this from my own experience. But this May Day we had the opportunity to take on this challenge.

We participated in the bus caravan organized by the “official” immigrants’ rights groups. The leaders of these groups have always worried about pleasing the political parties, to win a few reforms. This time the bus caravan was called “pro-immigrant,” in favor of obtaining driver’s licenses. It completely ignored the true significance of May Day.

After a lot of collective struggle in our Party clubs, we decided to participate. Why? Because it provides an opportunity to influence people and win them to the Party’s goal of uniting all workers in the class struggle against the bosses. The objective in this specific activity was to dramatize the importance of continuing to celebrate May Day as International Workers’ Day, not only for immigrants but for workers everywhere.

We pointed out the limits of this caravan in only allowing members of certain organizations to participate, not reaching out to the whole working class. We said that not only should the 400 participants take to the streets on this day, but also that thousands more would have come had these groups called for a true celebration of international workers’ unity.

A caravan rider

Union Hacks Betray 400,000 Ready for General Strike

VANCOUVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA, May 4 — “Under democracy, you have the right to strike — until you need it!” That was the response from one angry worker to the betrayal of this province’s 40,000 strikers in the Health Employees Union (HEU) by misleaders who are committed to working within the bosses’ rules — rules that change when their system’s crisis deepens amid endless imperialist wars and worldwide fascist terror. Only a revolutionary communist movement that leads a fight against pay cuts and mass layoffs, AND organizes to overthrow the capitalists can eliminate a system that contains such built-in betrayals.

Tens of thousands of grocery, postal, Hydro-electric and ferry workers joined bus drivers, carpenters and joiners, teamsters, Air Canada mechanics and most other government employees — including 40,000 teachers and 70,000 CUPE members (Canadian Union of Public Employees) — in threatening a general strike of more than 400,000 on May 3rd. Some had already walked out in solidarity with the health workers.

The massive strike action was ignited by the Provincial Government’s vicious sexist attack on the province’s 40,000 health workers (80% women). In trying to jam a 15% wage-cut down the workers’ throats along with contracting out thousands of jobs (in B.C. all hospitals are public), the rulers used the full power of their state apparatus to pass a law making the workers’ strike illegal, imposing unlimited contracting out and a 15% wage-cut retroactive to April 1, to be deducted from their workers’ paychecks.

After health workers defied the government ban, thousands of workers walked out in solidarity with their low-paid

(roughly US \$11/hr), hard-working and dedicated union brothers and sisters, often joining the HEU picket lines.

By Friday, April 30, workers from smaller industrial towns like Prince George and Comox showed up on the lines, as did 2,000 supporters in Nanaimo. On Saturday, May 1, almost half a million workers threatened a general strike for Monday, May 3. A multi-racial crowd of 6,000 workers and youth — reflecting the international population of Vancouver — held the most militant May Day in recent history here.

Government ministers spent all day Sunday secretly “negotiating” with HEU leaders and Jim Sinclair, the sellout weasel who heads the BC Federation of Labor. Almost certainly the government warned the unions that all the leaders and picketers could be arrested and the union fined into bankruptcy. So, by late Sunday evening a shabby deal was announced: a 15% pay-cut (but not retroactive), layoffs “limited” to “only” 600, while contracting out stays. HEU leaders agreed to return to work and call off Monday’s general strike — all without a ratification vote.

Some people still stayed out but the majority returned, angry, frustrated and blaming the union leadership for the cowardly betrayal. One member said, “We need leaders who can pull the trigger when the bullet’s in the chamber.”

Betrayal is all one can expect from the bosses’ union lieutenants who work within, and defend, their system. Capitalism’s drive for maximum profits determines and destroys workers’ lives. The only solution? Bury it with communist revolution.☸

Pro-War Sellout Contract

continued from page 8

Workers are disgusted, but reaction is mixed about what to do. Without a contract for a year and half, many are reduced to settling for “a bird in the hand.” The leadership is pushing hard for ratification (54 of 56 Local presidents endorsed it). However, where there is principled leadership, workers will oppose it. At the Technical Guild local, after many members had spoken angrily against the settlement and its support from the Local president and 1st VP at the last meeting, the delegates unanimously rejected it. They applauded the point that billions are available for sweetheart deals like the proposed Jets stadium and especially for the Iraq war, but not for overdue raises.

It’s unclear why D.C. 37 would infuriate both the members and the other unions by accepting such a weak con-

tract. Clearly the local misleaders disagree on how to maintain control of the rank and file. But the end result is demoralization, cynicism about fighting back and declining living standards.

The D.C. 37 leadership is mostly in the back pocket of the liberal Democrat wing of the ruling class, who are in virtual lock-step with the Republicans over backing the new gunboat diplomacy, eroding past gains and stifling dissent. While it’s not easy to advance a revolutionary, or even militant platform within the unions today, anger at the cutbacks and disgust with the union hacks are widespread. When we openly expose the leadership’s corruption and support of the profit system, workers can be won to a position that fights for working people and rejects capitalism.☸

REMEMBERING ANDY RAKOCHY

In 1967, Andy Rakochy visited me in Cincinnati, Ohio. I had been in touch with the Party, and he came to recruit me. He said I should move to Chicago. “We’re building the party there.”

I remember him as a quiet, modest person. He didn’t act like a “big leader” or brag about where he had been, what he had done. He was always able to laugh at himself.

When I arrived in Chicago, Andy was my club and study-group leader. He was always serious. We learned a lot about economics and Marxist theory. I suppose we were all a little naïve back then. We thought the revolution was on its way. Some of us were pretty full of ourselves, thought we were the hotshots. But not Andy. His attitude was, “Let’s do the work, let’s work together.”

Whether it was a study group, a CHALLENGE sale, a demonstration, a meeting with some students or workers — Andy was always prepared. He never talked too much or acted like he had all the answers. He had what you might call proletarian modesty.

Andy Rakochy eventually stopped working with the Party, but until the end he was always a person on whom you could rely. He worked at Inland Steel until shortly before his passing. His fellow workers respected him. People always wanted to know what Andy thought about what was going on.

He passed on a sense of social responsibility to his children. Life and the struggle continue.

Andy’s mother was a Bolshevik courier in czarist Ukraine. He helped build the Party in New York and Chicago. His children, his family and the people he touched will carry on the struggle in a myriad of ways. Today, we remember and miss Andy Rakochy. But we are thankful that he was here. He DID MAKE a difference.

Red Steel Worker

RED EYE ON THE NEWS

BELOW ARE EXCERPTS FROM MAINSTREAM NEWSPAPERS THAT CONTAIN IMPORTANT INFORMATION:Abbreviations: NYT=New York Times, GW=Guardian Weekly (UK)

Cops-for-profit grill Iraqis

The idea that extracting information from prisoners might be turned into a for-profit operation would have seemed a...joke not long ago....

Now...Security firms have an estimated 20,000 employees in Iraq — a huge private army....

So...hiring free-lance “intelligence specialists” must have seemed a no-brainer....

Private contractors in combat zones such as Iraq....are not answerable to any law....This legal grey zone may well not be entirely accidental, of course. It means that private contractors can be used to do dirty work for the military or the CIA with plausible deniability and relative immunity. (GW, 5/12)

Skim health aides’ wages

Medicaid and Medicare typically pay around \$18 an hour for home health aides...but the people who do the work — most of them immigrant women — get about \$7 of that.

Many of the government contractors and their subcontractors pay their execu-

tives hundreds of thousands of dollars a year....

Health aides say the people they care for would not survive without them....

“It’s hard work....Americans always say to us, they would never do what we do for what we are paid.” (NYT, 5/3)

Brass knew prison facts

The International Committee of the Red Cross regularly complained to senior United States officials in Iraq and in Washington over the last several months about prisoner abuse at Abu Ghraib prison....

The reports were based on the Red Cross’s interviews with prisoners and “were very extensive and detailed.”

“We knew everything that was going on.” (NYT, 5/7)

US imperialism needed 9/11

The head of the United States-led coalition in Iraq, L. Paul Bremer III, warned six months before the Sept. 11 attacks that the Bush administration seemed to be paying no attention to terrorism. (NYT, 4/30)

Towns profit from prisons

A study mapping the prisons built in the boom of the last two decades has found that some counties in the United States now have more than 30% of their residents behind bars....

The prison network is now deeply intertwined with American life....

“It provides jobs for construction workers and guards, and because the inmates are counted as residents of the counties where they are incarcerated, it means more federal and state funding....Conversely, the federal money is lost to the home communities of the inmates or their families, creating a financial burden. (NYT)

Rich brought in Hitler & Co.

The Bolshevik Revolution...made conservative elites in Italy and Germany so fearful of Communism that anything — even fascism — came to seem preferable to a Marxist overthrow....

How on earth was it that Benito Mussolini, who won a mere 4,796 votes out of 315,165 in the 1919 election, could find himself appointed prime minister in

1922?....

It was the societal ills, the conservatives’ fear of a Communist revolution....

How could Hitler, whose Nazi Party placed him ninth in 1928 (with only 2.8% of the popular vote) soar to first in 1932 (with 37.2%)?...Paxton debunks the consoling fiction that Mussolini and Hitler seized power. Rather, conservative elites desperate to subdue leftist populist movements “normalized” the fascists by inviting them to share power.... At each fork in the road, they choose the antisocialist solution.”

5 days jail per worker-kill

Employers...commit safety violations that result in the deaths of workers. These willful violations leave about 100 workers dead each year, yet prosecutions are almost unheard of....

The Times, which analyzed two decades of safety violations data, identified 2,197 workers whose deaths, according to safety inspectors, were the result of willful safety violations. In all, their employers faced...jail sentences totaling less than 30 years. (NYT, 4/28)

'The Red Flag Has Won!'

The racist atrocities routinely committed by imperialist armies (see article, p.2) stand in stark contrast to the practice of communists in bosses' wars. Communist parties put forth a two-pronged strategy:

Transform imperialist war into its opposite: civil war for communist revolution and workers' power.

Urge soldiers on both sides of the trenches to fraternize with each other and unite against our real class enemies: the officers and the profit system they defend.

The history of imperialist war in the 20th Century has numerous examples of such mutiny and fraternization in the midst of imperialist slaughter. For obvious reasons, the capitalist-controlled media and the official version of history taught in the schools and universities, suppresses them. Our class must resurrect and cherish them, revealing our past accomplishments and confirming of our potential.

One such example is the mutiny and working-class solidarity that flew the red flag over the major cities of Alsace and Lorraine at the end of World War I. Alsace and Lorraine were then German provinces, seized from France in the war of 1870-71, which had led to the heroic Paris Commune, the first attempt ever at workers'

power.

In October 1918, a few German generals refused to recognize that they had lost World War I. They launched a last-ditch struggle, using the still-powerful German navy. But the sailors refused to obey. In Kiel, the main German port on the Baltic Sea, seamen mutinied and established a Soviet—a revolutionary workers' council, similar to the workers' organizations that had led the Bolshevik Revolution a year earlier.

A number of Alsations and Lorrains who had been forced into the German navy joined the insurrection and incited their countrymen to follow suit. On November 9, thousands of demonstrators rallied in Strasbourg, Alsace's main city, to hail the first insurgents returning by train from northern Germany. The train had to fight its way through troops loyal to the German emperor, but the rebels broke through.

These sailors took control of Strasbourg. Red flags flew throughout the city, including atop the 500-foot-high cathedral. A newly-established Council of Workers and Soldiers proclaimed: "We have nothing in common with capitalist states. Our motto is: 'Neither German nor French nor neutral. The red flag has won!'"

But the Council made a fateful error by conceding power to the supposedly "lesser-evil" French army, which was marching on the city. The Strasbourg Soviet lasted only a few days.

Nonetheless, it managed to send a jolt of revolutionary inspiration throughout the region. Similar Soviets arose in the Alsatian cities of Haguenau, Mulhouse, Sélestat, and Colmar. Across the front, French and German soldiers fraternized and marched holding red flags. In Lorraine, Italian immigrants joined the insurrection. In Metz, the insurgents' council seized the city hall, hoisting a Turkish flag whose nationalist crescent and star had been colored with red paint.

This short-lived heroism of French, German, Italian and Turkish workers in the midst of imperialist butchery should continue to inspire us and set a standard for PLP's work now. We can learn from our predecessors' errors. We also have much to

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learn from their magnificent accomplishments.

Many years after the Strasbourg revolt, an elderly participant recalled: "I was 18 years old. I will never forget those days." Workers everywhere should learn this history and honor it by duplicating and surpassing it. ☸

TRUCKERS MUST TAKE WORKING-CLASS ROUTE

LOS ANGELES, April 30 — "Truckers united will never be defeated"; "This struggle will lead to a general strike!"; "The workers will win the struggle against the bosses."

These and other slogans were repeated in today's march organized by hundreds of independent truckers in Wilmington, ten minutes south of LA. Several speakers related the rising diesel fuel prices and taxes (lowering truckers' income) to the war in Iraq.

Thousands of independent owner-operators held a state-wide work stoppage demanding lower diesel prices and lower taxes. The drivers who work out of the ports of Oakland and LA were central to this action. The port here was almost completely paralyzed.

The day started here with some drivers parking their big rigs in the middle of the freeway, temporarily immobilizing rush-hour traffic, causing chaos to highlight their demands. Three drivers were arrested and their trucks confiscated. Others drove their trucks in caravans on the streets and highways. At noon, hundreds marched in Wilmington.

Many owner-operators drive for large trucking companies, like Federal Express but — to become small business owners — have invested heavily and are deep in debt. The collapse of the labor movement has drastically impacted the trucking industry. Work that used to go to union drivers of company-owned trucks has been "outsourced" to independent drivers. Many poorer independent drivers would prefer to have



decent-paying jobs with benefits, working for trucking companies, instead of the headaches of owning one's own rig. However, because of racism and many being immigrants, they are frozen out of these union jobs. But still capitalist "own-your-own-business" psychology sucks many into the illusion of being "their own boss," as a way out of the working class. This leads them to side with capitalist ideology rather than with the working class.

Squeezed on all sides by exorbitant bank-loan interest, oil profiteers' high fuel prices and rising taxes induced by imperialism's war drive, these "independent" truckers are hardly independent of capitalism. In the heat of the class struggle, they must be shown that their best interests lie with the working class. ☸

Pro-War, 2-Tier Contract Splits NYC Workers

NEW YORK CITY, May 9 — It's difficult to give up the illusion that the union's role is to protect workers. Too often it's painfully clear the bosses rely on the unions to control workers. In a particularly blatant example, AFSCME's District Council 37, the city's largest municipal union (121,000 members) just settled for a pathetically weak contract with the city bosses. Contracts like these divert funds away from already thread-bare social services to the bosses' oil war. These pro-war contacts are being endorsed by unions that passed anti-war resolutions two years ago.

After settling for "double zeroes" (no increases) under hard-nosed racist mayor Rudi Giuliani, Lillian Roberts and the D.C. 37 leadership want us to agree to

a \$1,000 bonus the first year, a 3% raise the second year and 2% the third, with a paltry 1% more based on increased productivity (read: speed-up).

Worst of all, contract "savings" stem from a two-tier system selling out future workers (offensively called "newborns") with 15% lower starting salary and benefits, splitting workers' unity. And the City isn't even crying poverty — billionaire mayor Michael Bloomberg brags about a billion-dollar budget surplus. Even the other municipal union officials, clearly no friends of the workers themselves, are outraged that the D.C. 37 leadership would settle for this.

continued on page 7

GI's Crucial to Defeat of Imperialist War

(Excerpt of veteran's speech at LA May Day dinner. Full text available on PLP website.)

From October 2002 to March 2003, the largest anti-war movement in history protested the U.S. government's [impending] imperialist invasion.... [But] it was painfully clear that the street demonstrations had done effectively nothing to stop the war....

A great historical lesson....is that the soldiers and sailors inside the military...must take up the resistance against imperialist war. Indeed...the history of such resistance...as well as among industrial workers is the history of revolution itself....

[There are] four levels of resistance inside the military.

Level one: reluctant fighters....passive resistance....

This...can quickly change to become limited active resistance, or level 2....

Letters from soldiers emphasize dissension in the ranks. One soldier noted... "Things are getting very bad, and they're going to get worse...." As a veteran myself, I can tell you there is nothing like the disappointment of thinking you're going home on a certain day and then having your term extended....

The Army admits to about 700 desertions since the war started.... [and] veterans' benefits have been cut!

Level 3 resistance exhibits soldiers' outright refusal to fight for the imperialist agenda. This occurred in Vietnam....

While the third level...sends capitalism into crisis, in the long run a full revolutionary army must emerge to confront the capitalist system [4th level].

....The rulers have been working hard to build racism and patriotism to try to win the soldiers to side with them. Resistance to imperialism needs to be built by class conscious organizers.... Soldiers must become convinced that they are not just against a corrupt and unjust system, but that they are for a new communist system. All the great revolutions in history achieved this phase....

More boots on the ground will be needed. The U.S. imperialists will not give up their efforts, literally at any cost.... Thus the common soldier and sailor will become the focal point of the battle between fascist ideas and practices and anti-fascist ones, for class consciousness and the struggle for a far better...communist system. We must communicate to our brothers and sisters in the military and prepare for the very serious struggles ahead. Young people should welcome the opportunity to organize their fellow working-class youth. It will be difficult and daunting, but it is absolutely necessary. ☸